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ILLINOIS

GOOSE LAKE
PRAIRIE
STATE PARK

SIGHTS OF MID-SUMMER

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA

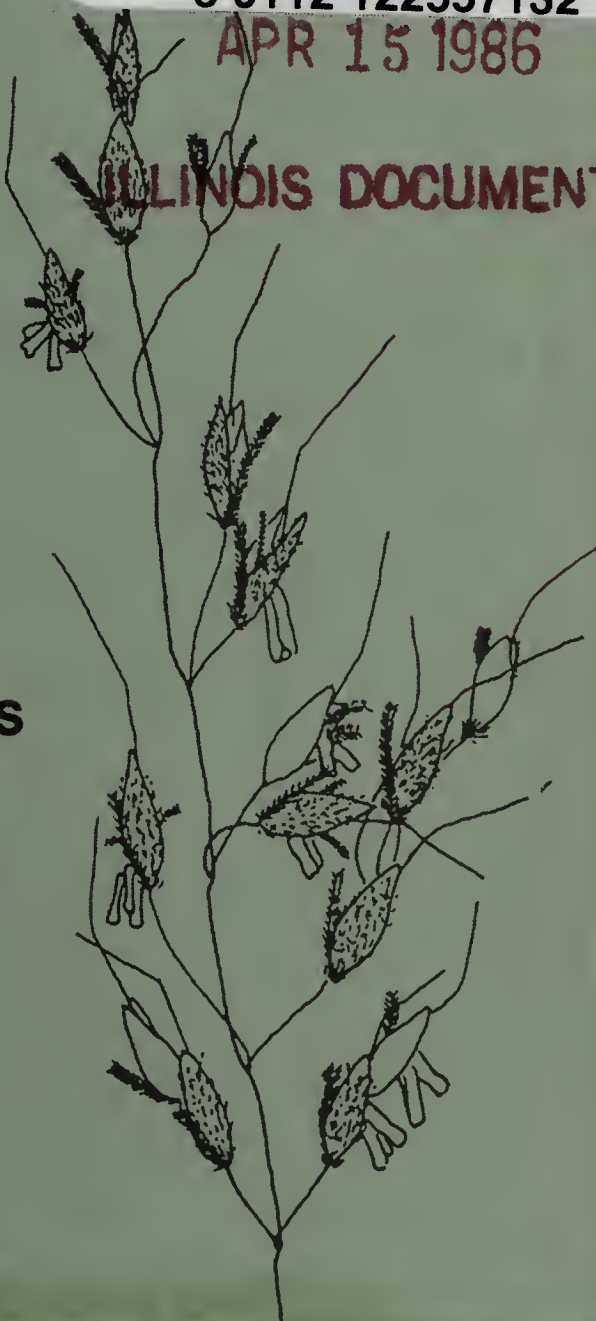


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ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

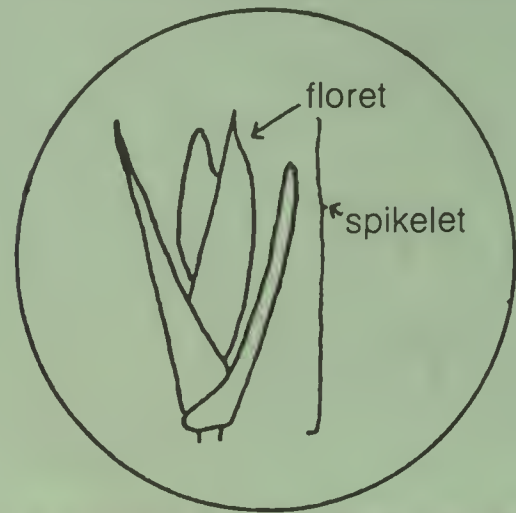
Grasses
in
Bloom



CONSERVATION

Some of the most interesting prairie flowers are the *grasses*. That's right! Grasses are flowers too. But they're small, so look closely. And don't forget to bring a magnifying glass. Since the flowers are wind pollinated they lack the showy array of petals that is found among the forbs. Instead, their beauty lies in the intricate detail of their delicate structures.

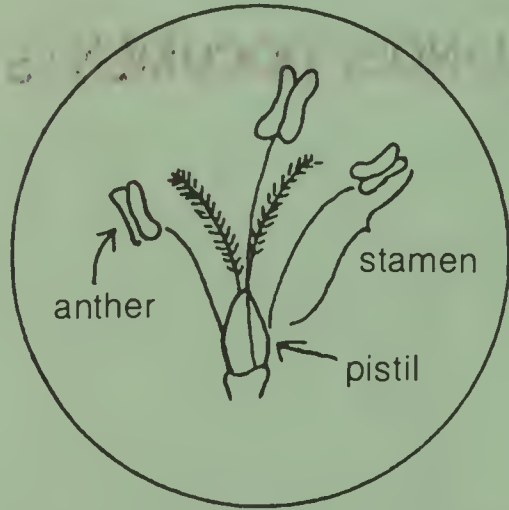
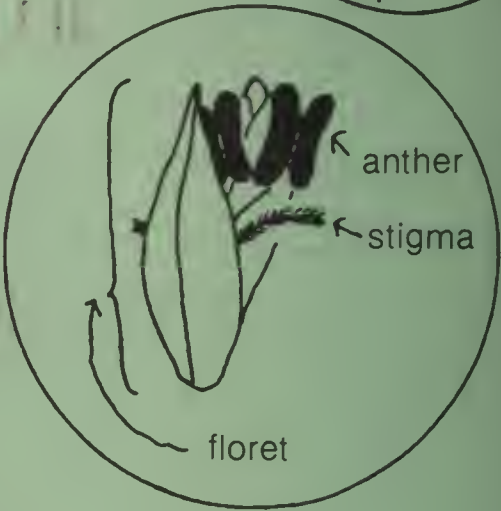
NORTHERN PRAIRIE DROPSEED



A grass flower is called a *floret*. Florets grow either singly, as in Northern Prairie Dropseed (on the left), or in bunches, like Canada Wild Rye. Two tiny modified leaves cup the floret;



this unit is called a *spikelet*. Grasses in bloom seem to explode open so the wind may carry pollen from another [♂] to stigma [♀]. The seed develops in the pistil of the floret.



NORTHERN PRAIRIE DROPSEED

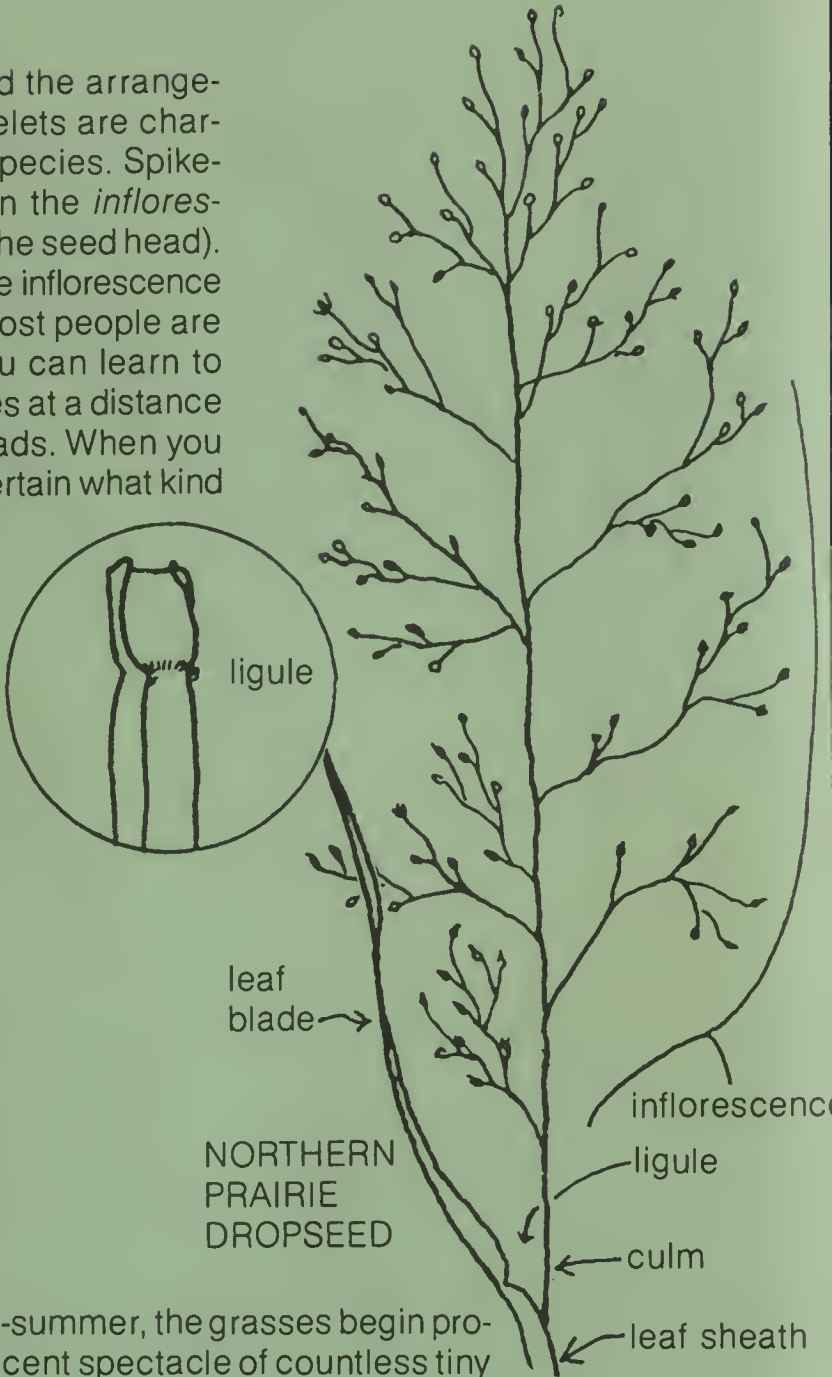


This is called an *awn*; it is a part of the floret of some prairie grasses. Since the awn is rough it helps transport the seed by catching in the fur of animals and also helps drill the seed into the ground so it can germinate.

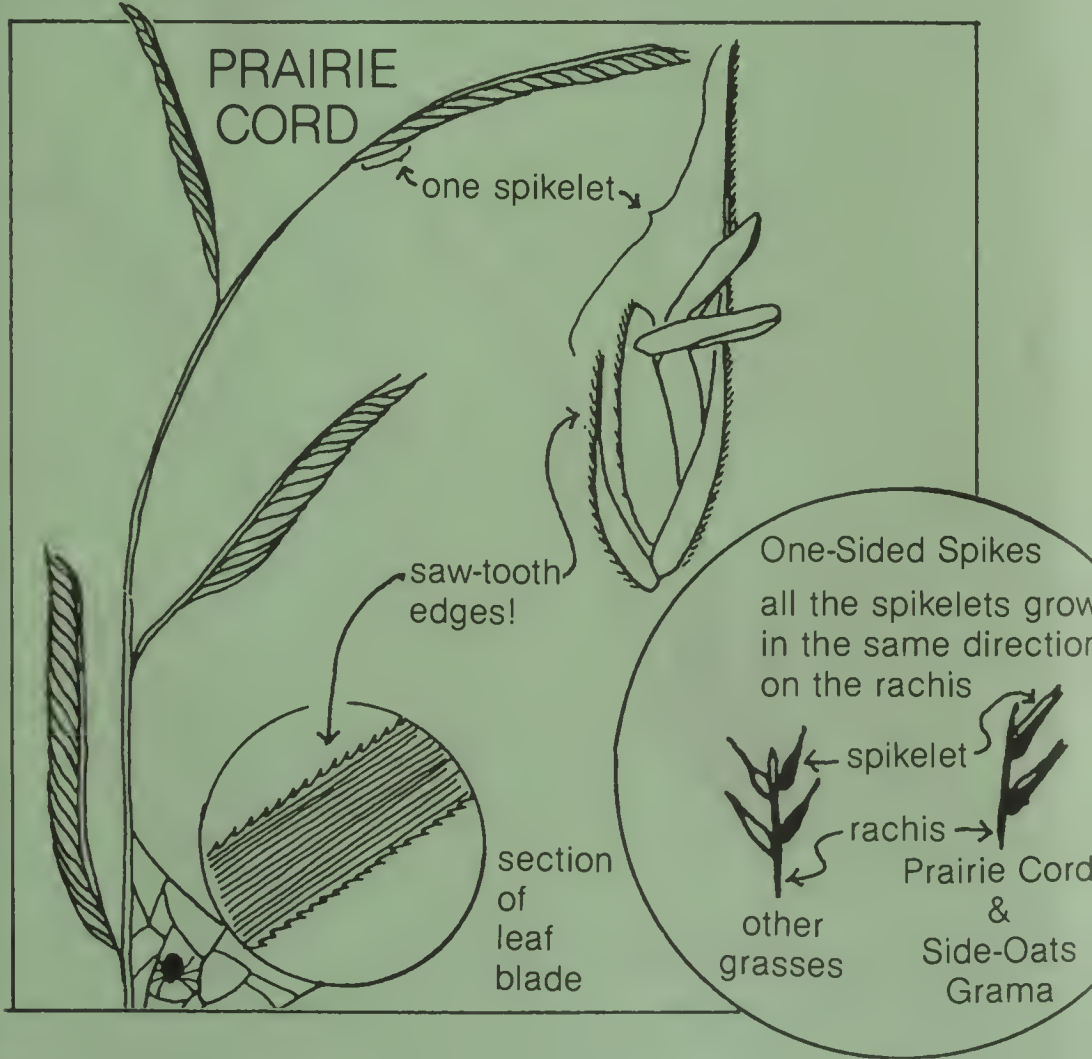
BLUEJOINT



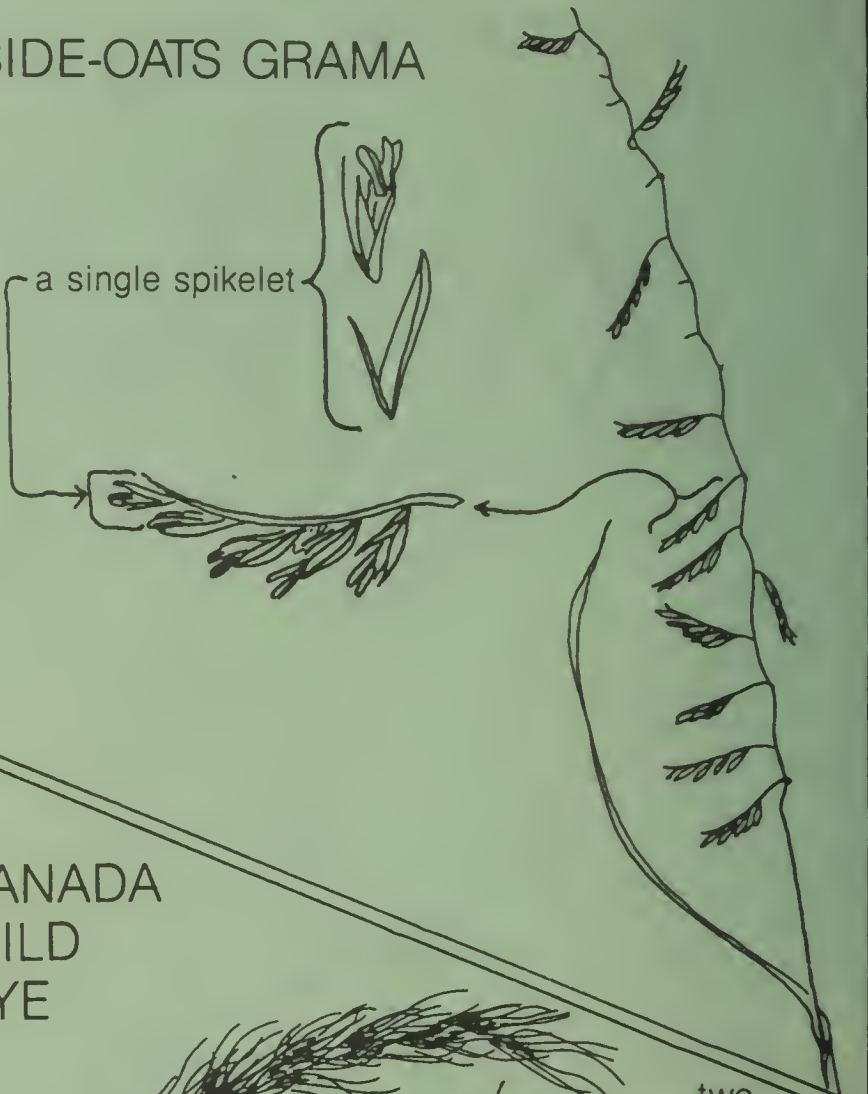
The spikelets and the arrangement of the spikelets are characteristic for a species. Spikelets are borne on the *inflorescence* (which is the seed head). Oftentimes it is the inflorescence of a grass that most people are familiar with. You can learn to recognize grasses at a distance by their seed heads. When you are not exactly certain what kind of grass you are looking at, another character to look at is the *ligule*, which occurs at the junction of leaf sheath and leaf blade.



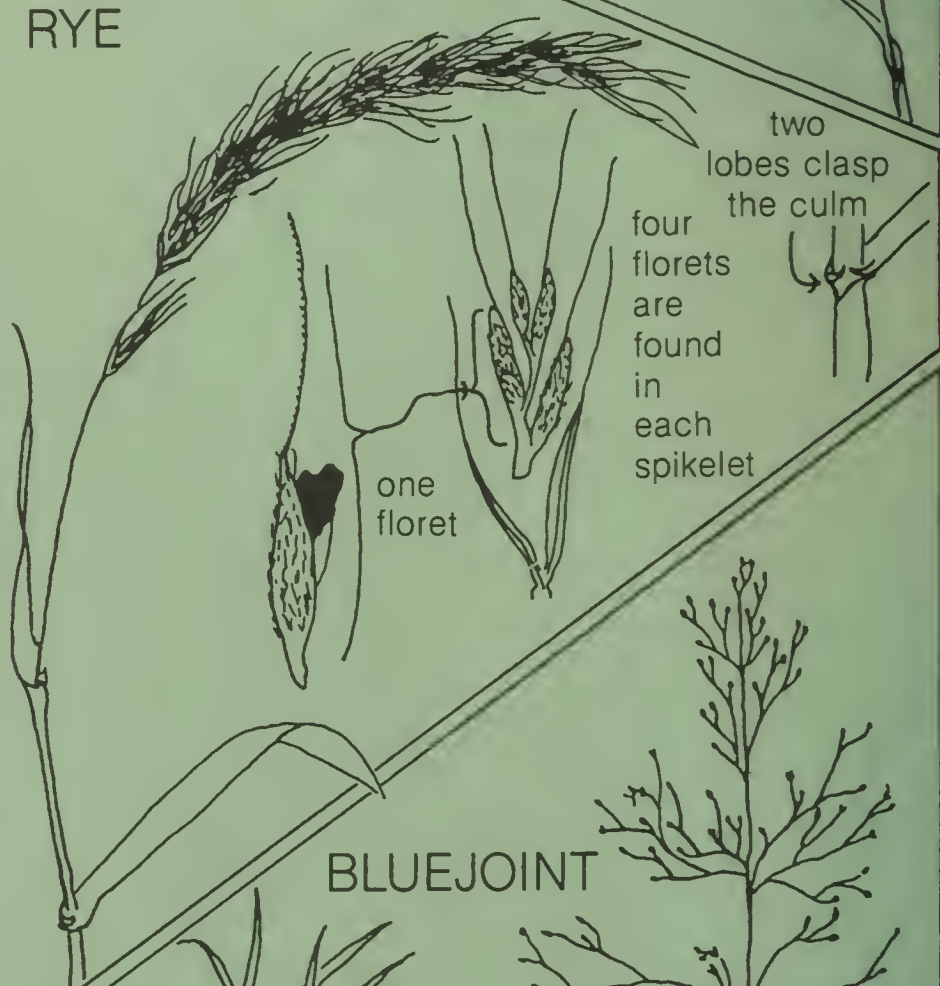
Sometime in mid-summer, the grasses begin producing a magnificent spectacle of countless tiny blooms that dot the prairie with bright color. The inflorescences are tossed by the breezes, and sometimes here, sometimes there, a splash of orange or yellow shows among the green. Following are illustrations of some of our most common prairie grasses at Goose Lake Prairie.



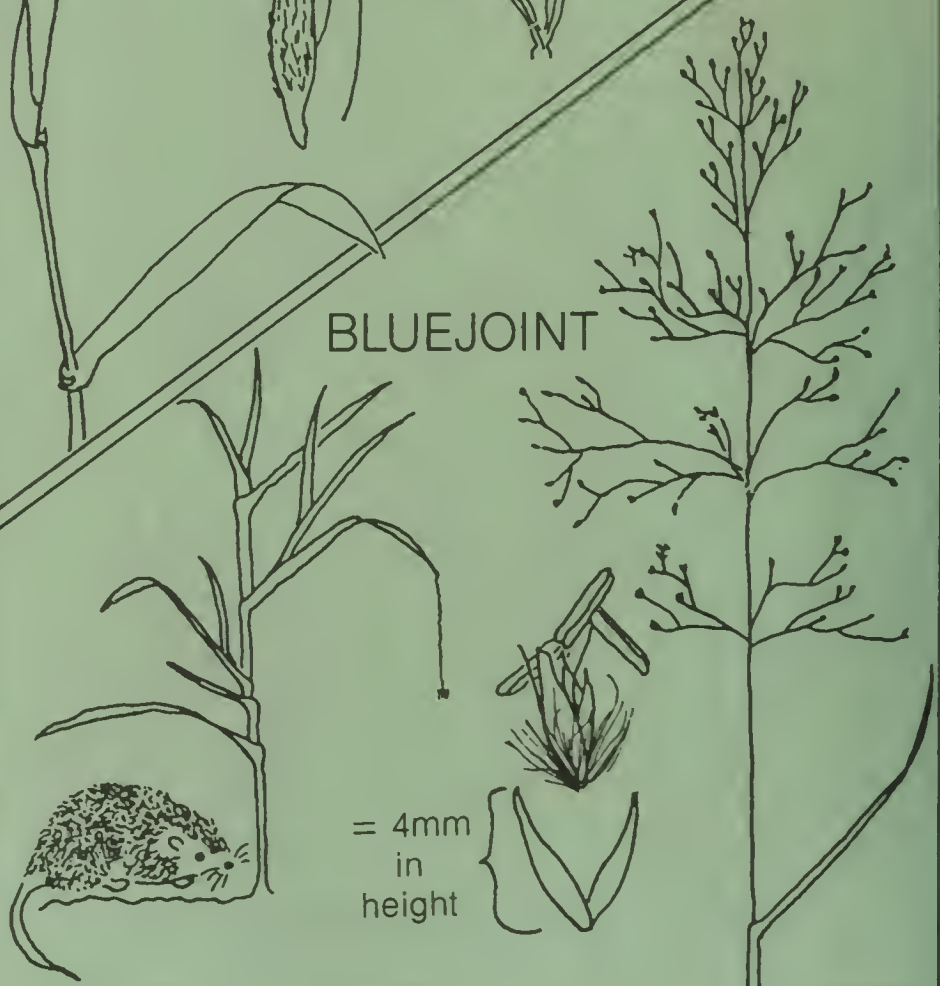
SIDE-OATS GRAMA



CANADA
WILD
RYE



BLUEJOINT

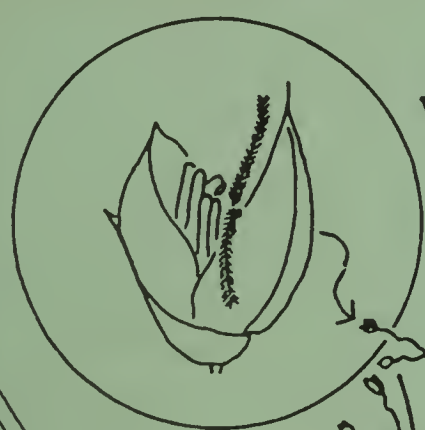


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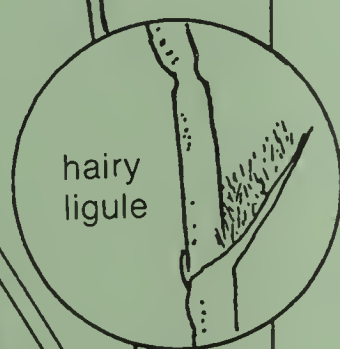
GOODS 4

C. 3

SWITCHGRASS



it's
feather
shaped!

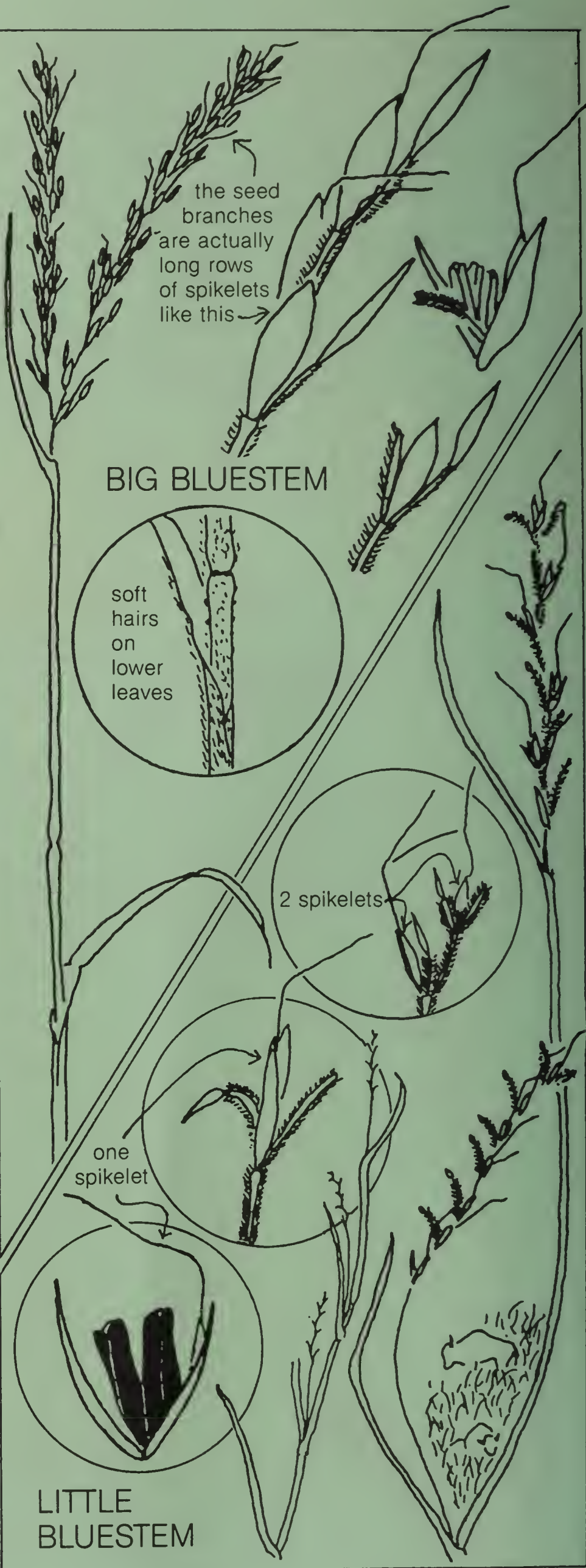


hairy
ligule

look
for this
claw-like
ligule
where the
leaf blade
begins



INDIAN GRASS



the seed
branches
are actually
long rows
of spikelets
like this

BIG BLUESTEM

soft
hairs
on
lower
leaves

2 spikelets

one
spikelet

LITTLE BLUESTEM